

# MANTRAS

*By the Corresponding Secretary*

The word *mantra* is Sanskrit, and it is practically equivalent to our word charm or spell. The majority of those used in India for good purposes are the verses from the Vedas, pronounced with intention according to traditional methods, which are the outcome of practical occult knowledge. There are also many mantras employed by men who follow the Tantrikas, and those are just as often used for evil as for good; so we find afloat in India a great number of them, both desirable and undesirable. If we are ready to classify them from our Western point of view, I would say that there are five main types of these mantras:

1. Those that work simply by faith.
2. Those that work by association.
3. Those that work by agreement or covenant.
4. Those that work by their meaning.
5. Those that work by their sound, without reference to meaning.

1. The first class produce their effect simply because of the strong conviction of the operator that the result must follow, and because of the faith of the person upon whom they are operating. If both men are sure that something will happen—say the cure of a wound or disease—then that thing *does* happen; and in some cases the faith of only one of the parties seems to be sufficient. In England, and indeed among the peasants in all countries, quite a number of such charms are being used in country places. People have little forms of words, generally semi-religious in character, which have been handed down to them by their forefathers, and these are supposed to produce definite results. They often seem the merest nonsense; the wording is frequently not even coherent. They are probably corruptions of certain forms of words, either in English or in some cases Latin or French. They do not work by meaning, for they have none. They do not work by sound, for they have none of the sonority indispensable to the true mantra; but when recited over patients under certain conditions they are at times unquestionably effective. In such cases it must be faith in the ancient formula which produces the result.

Many familiar charms found in Oriental countries appear to act through faith. I can give one example from my personal knowledge which I suspect to be of that nature. Once when I was in the interior of Ceylon I was bitten rather badly on the hand by a dog. The wound was bleeding considerably. A casual passer-by, an agricultural labourer by the look of him, rushed up, snatched a leaf off the nearest shrub, pressed it on the wound and muttered some words which I could not understand; and the wound immediately stopped bleeding. This charm, therefore, undoubtedly worked, and certainly not through any faith of mine, for I had no idea of what the man was going to do. As is always the case in the East, the man would not take any money for the exercise of his powers. So far as I was able to hear the words, I should say that they were incoherent, or if coherent were at any rate neither Sinhalese, which would have been the man's own language, nor Sanskrit. I have been told that there are similar charms against snake-bite in Ceylon, and they also appear to work—again by faith, I imagine; everyone concerned is sure that something is going to happen, and so it does happen.

There is a variant of this type in which success is achieved by the strength of will of the operator. As he speaks his word or makes his sign he is utterly determined that a given result will follow, and accordingly it does follow. I have seen Prince Harisinghji Rupsinghji of Kathiawar cure instantaneously a man suffering from the sting of a scorpion. The man was already pallid and half-fainting from fright, writhing and groaning in acute pain, and scarcely able to drag himself along with the assistance of two friends; the Prince made over the wound the sign of the five-pointed star, spoke sharply one Sanskrit word, and in a moment the victim, who had sunk to the ground, staggered to his feet, declaring himself well and entirely free from pain, and then proceeded to prostrate himself before the Prince in gratitude.

2. There are mantras which work by association. Certain forms of words bring with them definite ideas, and quite change the current of our thoughts and feelings. An example of this is the National Anthem. the tune is simple and strong, but hardly of high rank as a melody; the words regarded merely as poetry, have in themselves no especial merit. If it were to us but one song among many other songs, it would probably attract but little attention. But our association with it is that of loyalty to the King, and through him to the Spiritual KING Whose Representative he is; and so powerful is this association that as soon as we hear that strain we straighten ourselves up instinctively and pour out our loyalty and goodwill towards the ruler and the land. And this evokes a definite response, for, according to the law, force so outpoured unselfishly must call down a corresponding descent of power from on high. This response comes through certain types of Angels connected with the work of the First Ray, and the

attention of these is attracted whenever the National Anthem is sung, and they pour out their blessing upon and through the people whose loyalty has been thereby stimulated.

Another example, though far less powerful, of a similar type of mantra is "The Voice that breathed o'er Eden"; we cannot hear that hymn without thinking strongly of a wedding and all the festive feeling of goodwill usually connected with such a function. Various Christmas hymns and carols also invoke in our minds a very definite stream of thought. The war-cries which played so prominent a part in the battles of medieval times were mantras of this type. There are a number of such forms, which instantly call up corresponding ideas, and they produce results because of their associations, and not because of anything inherent in themselves.

3. There are certain mantras which work by agreement or by covenant. Most religions appear to have some examples of this type. The great Muhammadan call from the minaret partakes of this character, although it has also something about it of the type which we have last considered. It is a declaration of faith: "There is no God but God" (or as some have translated it, "There is nothing but God," which is an eternal truth) "and Muhammad is the Prophet of God." It is interesting to see the effect produced upon the people by these words. It is far more than the mere thought of their meaning, for it calls up in those who hear it a fiery faith, a fanatical outburst of devotion, which is quite beautiful in its way, and very characteristic of Muhammadanism. This might be a mere instance of association, but for the fact that Angels of a certain type are evoked by the call, and it is their action which causes much of the enthusiasm to be exhibited.

It is perhaps in the Christian religion that we find the best examples of this third type of mantra, as those who know anything of the Services of the Church will realize. The greatest of them all is *Hoc est Corpus Meum*, "This is My Body"; for the Christ Himself has made a covenant with His Church that whenever that call is uttered, whenever those words are pronounced in any language by one of His duly ordained Priests, He will respond thereto. But this power is given under conditions, given only to those who are prepared by another mantra of the same type to receive it—a mantra also prescribed by Christ Himself—the words "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

The power which with these words He gave to His disciples just before He left them has been handed down with the same words in an unbroken chain for nigh two thousand years, and constitutes what is called the Apostolic Succession. Whenever a Priest who has been duly ordained in that Succession pronounces with intention those other words "This is My Body," a certain wonderful change is thereby brought about in the Bread over which he speaks them, so that though its outward appearance remains the same its higher principles or counterparts are superseded by the very life of the Christ Himself, so that it becomes just as truly His vehicle as was the body which he wore in Palestine.

There is no doubt of the working of the mantra "This is My Body," for its action can be seen to-day by those who have eyes to see. Lord Tennyson tells us in *The Idylls of the King* that Galahad, describing the celebration of the Eucharist, said:

I saw the fiery face as of a child  
That smote itself into the bread.

and just so any clairvoyant who watches the offering of that same Holy Sacrifice to-day may see the counterpart of the bread flash out into a line of living light when the same sacred mantra is spoken. All the branches of the Christian Church—the Roman Catholic, the Greek Orthodox, the Anglican, and the Liberal Catholic Churches—that celebrate the Holy Eucharist at all in the form which was laid down by the Christ, use those Words of Institution as part of their Liturgy, and in all of them that wonderful result is produced. All these branches of the Church, too, invoke the Angelic Hosts to assist in the Service, and that is done not only by a particular form of words, but also (when the Service is sung) by a particular form of music, by an arrangement of sounds which has persisted with but slight variation from an early period in the history of the Church. The Angels of a special type take those words as a call, and at once attend to play their part in the Service which is to be held.

4. We come now to a class of mantras which act by virtue of the meaning of the words repeated. A man recites a certain form of words with firm confidence over and over again, so that their meaning beats very strongly upon his brain and upon his mental body; and if he is trying, for instance to do a certain piece of occult work, such a repetition will greatly strengthen his will. Such mantras can be used in many different ways. As far as the man is concerned, they produce one of two effects; either they strengthen his will to do that which he is trying to do, or they impress upon him the absolute conviction that it will be done. Mantras of this type are given to members of the Esoteric School in their daily practice; the repetition of certain sentences at fixed points during the day tends to impress the ideas contained in the sentences strongly upon the mind. "More radiant than the Sun, purer than the Snow, subtler than the Ether, is the Self, the Spirit within my heart. I am that Self; that Self am I," is a good example of this type of mantra, and it is of course just as effective when thought as when spoken aloud.

Under this heading should come the various types of blessings such as are given in the Church, in Freemasonry, and by the

pupils of our Masters. Blessings may be arranged in two sections—those which a man gives from himself, and those which are given through him as an official by a higher power. The first kind of blessing is merely an expression of an earnest good wish. A typical instance of this is the blessing sometimes given by a father to his son, either on the deathbed of the former, or when the latter is about to start on some long and possibly dangerous journey. The blessing of the dying Isaac to his sons Esau and Jacob is a good illustration, though in that particular case complications were introduced by the scandalous duplicity of Jacob. Readers of the Scripture account of this incident will remember that Isaac was fully persuaded of the effectiveness of his blessing, and when he discovered the deceit which had been practised upon him, he was unable to reverse the wish which he had expressed. The question then arises, would a blessing of this nature bring any result, and if so how is that result produced? The only reply that can be given is that this will depend upon the earnestness of the good wish and the amount of spiritual force put into it. The blessing makes a thought form which attaches itself to the person who is blessed; the size, strength and persistence of that thought form depend upon the will power of the person giving the benediction. If the words were uttered as a matter of form, without much feeling or intention behind them, the effect would be slight and transient; on the other hand, if they came from a full heart and were uttered with definite determination, their effect would be deep and lasting.

The second type of blessing is that which is uttered by an official appointed for the purpose, through whom power flows from some higher source. A good example of this is the benediction with which most Church services conclude. These may not be given by anyone whose ecclesiastical rank is lower than that of Priest; and to this extent the blessing may be said to partake of the character of mantrams of the third class, since the power of giving a definite blessing is one of those conferred upon the Priest at his ordination. In this case he is simply a channel for the power from on high, and if it should unfortunately happen that he speaks it merely as a matter of course and as part of his ritual, that would make no difference to the spiritual power outpoured. The blessing flows equally over all, but the amount of the influence which any individual can obtain from it depends upon his receptivity. If he is full of love and devotion, he may be very greatly helped and uplifted; if he is carelessly thinking of some other matter, he will gain only the benefit of the impact of a higher vibration. It will be noted that when a Bishop is present at a service he always pronounces the benediction. The reason for that is that at his Consecration his higher principles are opened up much beyond those of the Priest; therefore power at those higher levels can be poured through him. The same general principle holds in Freemasonry also, for it is only either an Installed Master or an ordained Chaplain who pronounces the words of blessing in the course of the closing of the Lodge.

One who has been accepted as a pupil of a Master has thereby become a channel for His influence; and while that influence is always flowing through the pupil, he can certainly direct its full force for the moment upon any person as he wishes. In the same way, one who is an Initiate can give the blessing of the Brotherhood, which is in truth that of The King Who is its Head.

5. We may now consider the type of mantra which works only by its sound. The vibration which the sound sets in motion impinges upon the various bodies of man, and tends to bring them into harmony with it. A sound in the first place is an undulation in the air, and every musical sound has a number of overtones which it sets in motion as well. Four or five or more overtones are detected and recognized in music, but the oscillations extend a great deal further than the ear can follow. Corresponding waves are set up in higher and finer matter altogether, and therefore the chanting of a note or a series of notes produces effects upon the higher vehicles. There are sounds (I suppose we must still call them sounds), overtones which are too fine to affect the air; nevertheless they set etheric matter in motion, and that etheric matter contributes its oscillations to the man who recites the mantra and also to other people around him, and if he is directing his will towards any particular person, to that person the vibration will assuredly go. Thus the mantras which work by sound may produce decidedly material results on the physical plane, though there are other and finer waves sent forth at the same time which may affect the higher vehicles. Such a mantra usually consists of several ordered sounds, very resonant and sonorous in character. Sometimes a single sound only is used, as in our Sacred Word; but there are several different ways of saying that, and they produce quite different results according to the notes upon which its syllables are chanted, and the way in which they are pronounced. Of these methods our Outer Head has said that, while at the opening or closing of meetings of our School the way in which we commonly use it is the best, there are other cases in which we should emphasize the closed sound and not the open. We lengthen the A U into O; we strengthen that and carry it on for perhaps half the time of recitation, and then change to the M sound. But often for private recitation she recommends that the O should be quite short and the humming inside the head and in the centres should be prolonged. The results of these two methods differ greatly. When the O is prolonged we are affecting one another and the surrounding world, but with the long M almost the entire effect is produced upon ourselves. That humming sound is a very powerful thing. Sometimes the three letters A U M are sounded separately. Again, it may be taken on many different notes, low or high, and sometimes it is sung upon several notes in succession, in a sort of arpeggio. I have heard that according to the

Indian books there are supposed to be about one hundred and seventy ways of pronouncing the Word, each with its different effect, and it is thought to be the most powerful of all mantras.

This matter of sound is one that penetrates very deeply. "By the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made," in the first place. The Logos or Word is the first Emanation from the Infinite, and that quite certainly is far more than a mere figure of speech. It represents a fact, although that Emanation takes place at a level where there could not be anything such as we mean by sound, for there would be no air to convey it. Yet that which corresponds to and acts like sound is the power which is employed to create the Universe. I do not know that we can hope to have any understanding on this plane, in this world down here, of what is meant by that Creative Word. "He spake, and it was done." God said "Let there be Light, and there was Light." Very far back, very high up, we find the Sound which produces vibration that great Mantra, the Word made flesh, materialized, brought down to a point at which reverent imagination can attempt to grasp it. In this ultimate it is the first Expression of the Deity; the Eternal Thought concealed in darkness comes forth as the Creative Word. Perhaps because of this great Truth, words sung or spoken down here invoke higher power—power out of all proportion to the level to which they themselves belong. I am sure that there is another side of this whole question of sound which our minds cannot reach at present; we can only faintly adumbrate it. But at least we can see that the power of sound is a very great and a wonderful thing.

All mantras that depend upon the power of sound are valuable only in the language in which they have been arranged. If we translate such a one into another language, we shall have another and quite different group of sounds. Broadly speaking, the good mantra which is intended to harmonize the body and to produce beneficent results consists largely of long open vowels. We find this in our own Sacred Word, and the same is true of the Amen of the Egyptians, which has been handed down into the Christian Church. It is by the way, best sounded on two notes. The Church has its traditional way of taking it on two notes a semitone apart—usually F sharp and G. Mantras which are used for evil purposes contain nearly always short vowels and consonants of a tearing and disruptive character, such as *hrim*, *kshrang* or *phut*. These uncouth exclamations are delivered with a furious energy and spitefulness which certainly makes them terribly powerful for evil. Sometimes all the vowels in turn are inserted into these cacophonous combinations of consonants, and their utterances conclude with some peculiarly explosive curses which it seems impossible to express in any ordinary system of letters. In Oriental countries, where they know something about these things, I fear that the mantra is often used for evil purposes. That is so also among the negroes. I have come across a good deal of that in connection with Voodoo and Obeah ceremonies, of which I saw something both in the West Indies and South America, and I know that there is much in such spells and incantations.

Our connection with mantras will be only with those of a beneficent and kindly nature, and not with the maleficent. But good and ill alike have the same method of working; they are all intended to produce vibrations in the subtle bodies, either of the reciter or of those at whom he aims the mantra. Sometimes they are intended to impose entirely new rates of oscillation. It strikes Western minds oddly that people should be recommended to recite a mantra three thousand times. Our first feeling is: How can we find time? We say that time is money; the Oriental says that time is naught; it is a difference in the point of view. The Oriental methods and ideas are often unsuited to our Western lives; but none the less they have their value for those for whom they are intended. Some have felt that the study and meditation prescribed for the members of our Esoteric School is a heavy burden for those who are unaccustomed to such exercises; but no Oriental would ever think so.

The Brahman practically spends his life in religious recitations, for every act that he performs all through the day is always accompanied by some text or pious thought. It is a life lived absolutely in religion, or rather it is supposed to be such. In many cases to-day it is an outer form only, a sort of shell; but men still recite the words, even though they may not put the old life and energy into them. They have plenty of time; they can well afford to repeat a phrase a hundred and eight times a day; and the object of their doing so is perfectly clear.

The Christ is said to have warned His disciples not to use vain repetitions when they prayed, as did the heathen; and from that text the deduction has been made that all repetitions are useless. They assuredly would be so in an invocation addressed to the Deity, for they would imply that He had not heard the first request. They would be (or should be) unnecessary for disciples—for men who had already made some progress along the path of development; to formulate an intention clearly and to express it once strongly should surely be sufficient for them. But the ordinary man of the world has by no means reached that stage; it often needs a long course of steady hammering to impress a new vibration upon him, and so for him repetitions are far from useless, for they are deliberately intended to produce definite results. The constant impinging of these sounds, and of the various undulations which they set up, upon the different vehicles does tend steadily to bring those vehicles into harmony with a particular set of ideas.

This tuning-up of vibrations is analogous to the work done by an Indian Guru upon his pupils. I am told that he does not as a

rule give much direct teaching to his pupils, or indeed take much notice of them; but wherever he goes the pupils accompany him, and they are always within his aura night and day. All the time the waves radiating from his astral body are playing upon their astral bodies, the waves from his mental and causal bodies are playing upon theirs; and the result is that, because his vibrations are by the hypothesis stronger than those of his pupils, he gradually brings them into closer and closer harmony with himself, if they are in any way capable of being so tuned. The constant recitation of a mantra is intended to have a somewhat similar effect; it is designed to tune up the particular part of the mental and the astral bodies at which it is aimed, and there is no doubt at all that it can and does produce powerful results.

The same methods are prescribed in Christian lands. One may often see a Roman Catholic reciting his Aves and Paternosters many times over. Generally he just mutters them, and so they are of little use to him, except for the thoughts that they may suggest to him. In India mantras are always chanted, and the chanted mantra does produce an effect. That is one reason why the older languages are better in this respect than modern tongues. Modern languages are generally spoken quickly and abruptly, and only the Italian, Spanish and Greek peasants seem to speak in the old way in long, musical cadences. In the Liberal Catholic Church, however, we especially recommend that its services shall always be in the language of the country, because we find that far more devotion is aroused in the people if they understand clearly what is being said and can join intelligently in the ceremonies. But there can be no question that the Latin is more sonorous. Many mantras of this nature have no special meaning, are little more than a mere collection of vowels. In the *Pistis Sophia*, the well-known Gnostic treatise, there are a number of such meaningless mantras, marked in a way that must have indicated chanting.

Such rolling sonorous sounds as we find in the Indian mantras impose their rates of vibrations gradually on the various bodies, and so can be used to economize force, as our Outer Head has explained. Anything whatever that we do by a mantra we could do by our own will without the mantra; but the mantra is like a piece of labour-saving machinery. It sets up the required vibrations, doing part of the work for us and making it easier in consequence; we may therefore regard it as a means for economizing force.

Another point with regard to mantras which is stressed in the Indian books is that students are forbidden to use them in the presence of coarse or evil-minded people, because the power of a mantra will often intensify evil as well as good. If there were a person present who could not answer to the vibrations in their higher form, he might well receive a lower octave, which would be quite likely to strengthen the evil in him. We should never use a mantra where there are people who are likely to be injured by it.

Madame Blavatsky told us, I remember, that a mantra might be recited not for oneself at all, but with a special view to someone whom it was thought it might help. In this way you might recite the Sacred Word or the Gayatri, or any of those beautiful Buddhist mantras which flow so sweetly, thinking strongly of a special person and projecting towards him the force of the mantra. But she advised us to use these things with care. Again, she gave a caution that no one should attempt to use a mantra which is too high for him. None such will be given to us in the Esoteric School; but I would say this, as a caution to new members, that if the reciting of the Sacred Word in any particular way should produce headache or a feeling of nausea or faintness, it should be stopped at once. We should go on working at the development of our characters, and try it again in a few months. In using the Word, we are invoking great forces, and if we are not yet quite up to their level they may not be harmonious, and the result may be not invariably good.

In addition to the effect of the vibration of the chanted sound, many of these mantras resemble our third type in having powers associated with them. For example, certain Angels are connected with the Gayatri and the Tisarana, and they belong to very different types. The Gayatri is a call to the Logos Himself, and it brings with it the golden glow shot with electric blue that is ever the expression of His Power; also there are angelic figures associated with it. In India, students will remember, Shiva is sometimes called Nilkanta, the Blue-Throated One, and there is a legend connected with that title. It is interesting to note that some of the Angels who are called when the Gayatri is chanted bear that characteristic of the blue throat, and are clearly First Ray in type. When the Buddhist Tisarana is chanted the Angels that come are those especially associated with the Yellow Robe, and they bring with them a wonderful peace and joyousness, for although they are so peaceful they are among the most joyous in the world.

When we speak of Angels as "appearing" we must remember all the dimensions of space. They have not to "come" in the sense of starting from somewhere far away—from a far-distant heaven, for example. I do not know whether I shall make the matter hopelessly puzzling if I put it that the great forces representing the Logos manifest in those particular forms in answer to the Invocation. They are always there, always ready, but they turn themselves outward in response to the call.

That is the whole history of that sort of prayer and its answer. We have only to think strongly of an idea, and that which ensouls

it or represents it will manifest itself to us. Any strong thought of devotion brings an instant response; the Universe would be dead if it did not. It is in the natural law that the response must come; the answer is only the other side of the request, just as we say of karma that the effect is the other side of the cause. There is a wonderful unity in Nature, but people enfold themselves so thickly in their personalities that they do not know anything about it. It is only a question of opening ourselves up. One can quite easily see that when we are able to yield ourselves to Nature, we can practically command Nature, because by the attitude we take we can call forth its forces, and everything works with us. This is clearly explained in *Light on the Path*. We must recognize the forces of Nature, open ourselves up to them, and because these powers are flowing with us, everything that before was difficult becomes so much easier.

There is yet another section of the whole subject of mantras as to which I myself have very little information. There is the power not only of sound but of words as such, as numbers, and even of letters. We do not trouble about these things in modern days, but in the Sanskrit and also in the Hebrew alphabet every letter has its assigned value, not only of number, but also of power and colour. I have known clairvoyants who always see ordinary Roman letters as printed in our books as each of a different colour, A being always red, let us say, B always blue, O yellow, D green, and so on. I have never had any such experience myself; I suppose my mind does not work in that way. Similarly there are psychics who always see the days of the week as of different colours. That is not my experience; I am not sensitive in that way either, nor do I understand what is meant. That may perhaps be connected with astrological influences; I do not know. This aspect of things is also connected with mantras, and there is a school of mantrists who give to each letter a numerical value, quite independent of its position in the alphabet; and they will tell you that if they add up the values which they assign to the letters of a given word or sentence, and so arrive at a certain total, and if the same total can be made by adding the letters of another word or group of words, the same mantric effect will be produced by the two sentences. But about that I know nothing.

This much, however, I can contribute. Each word as it is uttered makes a little form in subtler matter, just as a thought does. Some of those forms are most objectionable, so much so that having seen its shape I never use the word. The word "hate," for instance, produces a horrible form. We may say that we dislike a thing, or that we do not care about it, but we should never use the word "hate" more than we can help, for merely to see the form that it makes gives a feeling of acute discomfort. There are words, on the other hand, which produce beautiful forms, words which it is well to recite. All this might be worked out scientifically, and will be some day, I have no doubt, when people have time to do it. The words which are connected with desirable qualities produce pleasant forms, and those which are connected with evil things produce ugly forms. Such word forms are not determined by the thought which accompanies the word; the thought builds its own form in a higher type of matter. For example, that word "hate" is often used quite casually without any real hatred at all, when speaking, perhaps, of some article of food; that is a perfectly unnecessary use of the word, and it obviously does not convey any serious emotion; and yet it makes the unpleasant form. So clearly the word itself is not a good word.

The same is true of the oaths and obscene words so often used amongst uneducated and uncultured people; the forms produced by some of these are of a peculiarly horrible nature when seen by clairvoyant sight. There are a number of analogous facts which will some day be built into an exact science. With forms colours always go, and very much could certainly be read from the colours of words. There are words of power, as all students of Ceremonial Magic know. Some of us belong to an Organization in which words and signs of power play a prominent part. I have heard of a case in which a person who was much terrified by an encounter with some very evil entity instinctively used one of these words of power with great effect. Such words and signs are very real things, though we sometimes use them now as a mere matter of form.

The mantra is usually a short, strong formula, and when for any purpose we want to produce a decided effect, that is the kind of form that our adjuration must take. If we wish to affect people profoundly and rapidly when speaking to them, we must use short strong sentences not long and rambling ones; they must follow the line of the military command or of the mantra; and there must be a definite climax. Suppose we wish to help a person who is frightened. We may formulate within ourselves such words as: "I am strong, strong, strong; I am part of God, and God is Strength, so I am full of that strength," and the repetition of the idea will bring the divine strength within us to the surface, and we shall be able to give help and courage to others. In this as in all other lines knowledge is power; if we wish to work to the best advantage we must understand, and if we wish to understand we must study. The wise man knows how to live in peace and happiness, because his life is in harmony with God's life. Comprehending all, he sympathizes with all; he has cast selfishness behind him for ever, and he lives but to help and to bless.